

CHAPTER 4 RECREATION INVENTORY

Recreation Facilities – Alpena Township

Alpena Township owns or leases seven parcels of land, two of which are developed for recreational use. A description of each follows along with an accessibility assessment of each site. Accessibility is rated using the following numerical system.

- 1=none of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 2=some of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 3=most of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 4=the entire park meets accessibility guidelines
- 5=the entire park was developed/renovated using the principals of universal design

Figure 4-1 at the end of the chapter shows the locations of the sites.

Alpena Township Hall and Alpena Huron Shores Babe Ruth League Fields

The Township municipal building is located at 4385 U.S. 23 North on an 11.45-acre parcel. The municipal building is used for Township offices, meetings, and voting space. A barrier-free ramp makes entrance to the building readily accessible. Restrooms are also accessible.

The Alpena Huron Shores Babe Ruth League Fields are located behind the municipal building. The site is classified as a sports complex. Current facilities consist of four regulation Little League ball diamonds, bleachers, dugouts, scoreboards, restroom/concession building, picnic tables, storage building, well house, two automatic sprinkling systems to maintain the fields, and an enlarged parking area with handicap accessibility. Alpena Huron Shores Babe Ruth League maintains the ball fields, and the Township pays the utilities. The facility is not only used for local Little League activities, but is a site for regional tournament games. Accessibility evaluation is #4.

This Little League Fields site was recipient to two DNR grants during its development phase. The first (project #26-01060-Z) awarded in 1978, provided two ball diamonds with bleachers and concession/storage building. The second (project #BF92-226) awarded in 1992, provided a new ball field with dugouts and storage building, picnic area, pavilion, tractor shed, and pump house. With these development features, the site has been suitable for Little League tournaments, in addition to regular season games.

The ball fields are accessed through the same driveway serving the municipal building, often creating safety issues. The Township purchased adjacent property for the purpose of a separate access drive for the ball field complex.

The Alpena Township Nature Preserve

This site, formerly “the Houghmaster property”, was acquired with assistance of DNR Trust Fund (project #TF02-128) and DEQ Coastal Zone grants and partnership with The Nature Conservancy. The 133-acre property is passive in nature. The key goal of the site is preservation, because of the unique geology and plant communities. The site is included in the

completed *Misery Bay Initiative*. An advisory committee was formed and developed a plan for uses of the site including nature trails, interpretive signage, and canoe/kayak access site. A plan will be developed for parking to accommodate the 133 acres. Possible funding sources for planning may come from US Fish and Wildlife, EPA, or DEQ Coastal Zone. Accessibility evaluation is #1, because of the site's undeveloped state.

VanWormer Field

Located on the corner of Bloom Road and Long Lake Road in Section 27 of T32N-R8E, this 5.46-acre site was the home to the old township hall. The building was removed, and the ball field remains the only use of the site. Huron Shores Little League uses and maintains the field. There is no water on-site, but porta-potties are provided during the season. Accessibility evaluation is #2; the site is generally level but has no paved surfaces.

Rockport Picnic Area

This picnic area provides gravel parking for use of picnic tables and grills, an access gate, observation benches, signage, and landscaping. This two acre site was recently developed in partnership with DNR and is adjacent to the Rockport boat launch site in Section 6 of T32N-R9E. Alpena Township has a long-term lease from the DNR for this picnic site. Picnic area accessibility evaluation is #5. Restroom facilities are located at the launch site. This project was funded in part with Trust Fund Grant #TF99-262.

Old Piper School

The building, currently leased on a long-term basis to the Northeast Michigan Alano Club, which is an affiliate of Alcoholics Anonymous, is located on Piper Road, just off Werth Road in Section 32 of T31N-R8E and is situated on just over one acre. Accessibility evaluation is #2.

Forty-Acre Parcel

The forty-acre undeveloped parcel is located on West Long Lake Road in Section 8 of T32N-R8E. The land was formerly used as the Township's landfill. Because of its undeveloped state, the site accessibility evaluation is #1. It is currently being used as a paintball park.

Public Access Site

This 0.8-acre lot is located in Section 23 of T32N-R8E at the Weiss Road Bridge crossing "The Narrows" of Long Lake Creek. The Township Fire Department uses the site to fill pumper tanks. The graveled slope to the water also serves as an informal boat/canoe launch. Potential for a picnic area exists in the cedar grove by the water, which could be further developed. Accessibility evaluation is #2.

Recreational Facilities in Alpena Township – County, State, Federal, and Schools

Long Lake Park – Alpena County

Located on the east side of Long Lake, this 68-acre site consists of 105 campsites (80 with water and electricity and 25 primitive sites). Other park facilities include restrooms/showers, dumping station, concession stand, concrete boat ramp, three docks, nature trails, two pavilions

with electricity, picnic tables, two playgrounds, two swimming beaches, and outdoor trailer storage.

Mackinaw State Forest – Michigan Department of Natural Resources

A 9,295-acre portion of the Mackinaw State Forest is located in Alpena Township. Forest lands are concentrated mainly in the southern section of the Township, with smaller scattered areas in the northeast section. State forest lands in the Township are designated for multi-purpose recreational usage as well as forest harvesting. Recreational usage entails primarily hunting, some hiking and nature observation opportunities are available, as well. Rockport Property, Norway Ridge Pathway, and Devil's Lake Snowmobile Trail are specifically developed for recreation. These areas are described in detail below.

Rockport Property – Michigan Department of Natural Resources

This site, located about ten miles north of the City of Alpena in Section 6 of T32N-R9E, provides Lake Huron access for larger boats including concrete ramp and docking facilities. Parking for vehicles/trailers and vault toilets are provided. Alpena Township partnered with the DNR to develop a picnic area adjacent to the launch area. The entire site covers nearly six square miles. Roughly 2,300 acres are in Alpena Township, and the rest is Presque Isle Township. Site features include an inactive limestone quarry, trails, several sinkholes, hibernacle (bat preserve) and forested land. DNR is in the process of developing a long-range plan for this property.

Norway Ridge Pathway – Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Situated 3 ½ miles southwest of Alpena on Werth Road, the pathway starting point is located in Section 6 of T30N-R8E. Seven miles of groomed trails, maintained by the Thunder Bay Trails Association since 1997, are used for cross-country skiing in the winter and for hiking and mountain biking during the other seasons.

Rails to Trails

Rail-Trail Corridors provide the foundation of a non-motorized dedicated trail system in the region. The North Eastern State Trail (NEST) and Alpena to Hillman Trail are part of a larger network of regional trails that cover over 280 miles throughout Northern Michigan. These trails connect multiple communities, parks, public forests, private forests and water features. This project was a collaboration between two state departments, local governments and a non-profit agency.

Devil's Lake and Devil's Swamp Snowmobile Trails – Michigan Department of Natural Resources

The trails are located off Werth Road and are part of the Mackinaw State Forest surrounding Devil's Lake. The combined distance of the trails is 28 miles. Although the trails are owned by DNR, they are maintained privately by the Alpena Snowmobile Association.

Devil's Lake Wildlife Flooding Area – Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Also located around Devil's Lake, this site is undeveloped, but would interest individuals who enjoy nature and wildlife observation.

Public Access Site – Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Located in Sections 10 and 11 of T30N-R8E at Partridge Point, the site provides access to Lake Huron's Thunder Bay.

Bike Path – Michigan Department of Transportation

This 1.4 mile paved pathway runs along the east side of U.S. 23 South, between the MDOT Alpena office and Mich-e-ki-wis Park just inside the Alpena city limits. The path can be used for biking, walking, running, or roller-blading. Although MDOT owns the path, Alpena Township is responsible for the maintenance.

Middle Island Lighthouse – United States

The lighthouse is located on an island approximately 4.5 miles east of Rockport and is operated by the Coast Guard. The rest of the island, the lighthouse keeper's quarters, two privies, and a tool shed are privately owned and are currently being restored.

Thunder Bay Island – Alpena Township/United States

Thunder Bay Island is located in Thunder Bay of Lake Huron in Sections 33 and 34 of T31N-R10E and Section 3 of T30N-R10E of Alpena Township. The Thunder Bay Island Light Station is located on the south end of the island. The remainder of the island is utilized as a wildlife refuge with walking trails throughout. Alpena Township in a partnership with the Thunder Bay Island Lighthouse Society is working to acquire and restore the boathouse, develop a break wall and handicapped accessible docking system and develop live feed camera system. Also, explore opportunities for public through the Misery Bay Bio-Diversity investment area and promote bird watching opportunities with Audubon Society.

Hinks Elementary School – Alpena Public Schools

Hinks Elementary School, situated on 39 acres on U.S. 23 North at the south end of Long Lake, is owned by the Alpena Public School District. Recreational facilities on the site include a gymnasium, nature trails, baseball diamond, basketball hoops, soccer field, and a playground. Although these recreational facilities are principally intended for school use, they are open for public use after school hours.

Gordon School Building – Alpena Public Schools

The Gordon School Building, sited on Gordon Road south of Alpena, no longer functions as a school, but serves as administrative offices for Alpena Public Schools. Office space is also leased to NEMSCA. There is one baseball diamond on the grounds, which is used and maintained by Alpena Huron Shores Babe Ruth League.

Recreational Facilities in Alpena Township – Private Sector

Private sector businesses often provide valuable recreational services to the public. Some of the facilities located in Alpena Township are listed below.

Decksider Marina

Located on the south end of Long Lake on West Long Lake Road, the marina serves recreational boating need of Long Lake users. Services provided include three docks, fuel, paved launch ramp, bait and tackle, full line of groceries, restaurant, and boat storage.

Dodge Marine and Storage

Located on Long Lake Park Road on the southeast side of Long Lake, the marina's services include boat sales and service, storage, fuel, bait and tackle, boat/pontoon/jet ski rentals and a paved boat launch.

Thunder Bay RV Campground

Thunder Bay RV Campground is located at 4250 US 23 South, Alpena and comes with 56 extra large pull-through sites with electric and water, ten tent sites, fish pond, pavilion, bathrooms, showers and dump station. Open April 1 - November 30.

Thunder Bowl

Located on the corner of Ripley Boulevard and U.S. 23 South, just outside the Alpena city limits, the facility features 36 bowling lanes, used for league and open bowling, and a billiard and game room.

Silver City Airpark

Located at the intersection of Bloom Road and U.S. 23 North, the facility is used for gliders during the warm weather months.

ARZO's Sports and Fun Park

Arzo's is located at 2516 US 23 North, Alpena. Formerly "Cars and Pars", this facility is located two miles north of Alpena at the intersection of Bloom Road and U.S. 23 North. Amenities include go-kart track, sky high bungee, full-sized indoor carousel, bumper cars, 18 holes mini golf, driving range, 5 multi speed batting cages, ferris wheel, arcades and more. Open Memorial Day through Labor Day, seven days a week.

J.J.'s Awesome Acres

J.J.'s Awesome Acres is located at 1120 US 23 North, Alpena and was voted 2009 Sunrise Sides Best with challenging 18 holes of adventure mini-golf with waterfall, babbling creeks, bridges and pond. Go-kart track, wet and wild bumper boats, game room and pavilion. Open Memorial Day through Labor Day, seven days a week.

Alpena Golf Club, Inc.

Just outside the Alpena city limits, the golf course can be reached by way of U.S. 23 North to 1135 Golf Course Road. The 150-acre complex is open to the public and features an 18-hole course, driving range, clubhouse, lunch counter, and irrigated fairways. A PGA professional

golfer is on site and available for lessons for the beginner and advanced golfer. During the winter months, the course is used for cross-country skiing.

Nearby Recreational Facilities

Residents of Alpena Township often utilize recreational facilities outside the township boundaries. Facilities most heavily used are located within the City of Alpena; they are listed below.

City of Alpena

- Alpena Area Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Alpena Boys and Girls Youth Club
- Alpena Yacht Club
- Apex
- Avery Park
- Bay View Park and Band Shell
- Besser Museum
- Bi-Path
- Blair Street Park
- Charter Fishing Boats
- Culligan Plaza
- Duck Park
- GKC/State Cinema
- Island Park and Wildlife Sanctuary
- Kurrasch Park
- Lee's Miniature Golf
- McRae Park
- Mich-e-ki-wis Park
- Ninth Avenue Dam
- Northern Lights Arena
- Oxbow Park
- Riverfront Park North
- Riverfront Park South
- Royal Knight Cinema
- Sky Theater Planetarium
- Small Boat Harbor
- Starlite Beach
- Tennis Courts
- Thunder Bay Fishing Docks
- Thunder Bay Scuba
- Thompson Park

Other nearby recreational facilities, many of which are located in the City of Alpena but managed by entities other than the City, are listed below

Schools

- Besser Elementary
- Oxbow School (ACES Academy)

- Ella White Elementary
- Lincoln Elementary
- Thunder Bay Junior High
- Alpena Senior High
- All Saints Catholic School
- Alpena Christian School
- Immanuel Lutheran School
- Seventh Day Adventist School
- Pied Piper Opportunity Center
- Alpena Community College Main Campus and East Campus

Other Recreation Facilities in the City of Alpena

- Thunder Bay Recreation Center (owned by Northeast Michigan Community Foundation features two indoor tennis courts, all-purpose gymnasium, fitness center/classes, convention/entertainment center, two meeting rooms, outdoor soccer fields)
- Alpena Civic Theater (amateur live theater)
- Thunder Bay Theater (professional live theater)
- Alpena Senior Citizens Center

Alpena County Facilities

- Alpena County Fairgrounds and Campground
- LaMarre Park
- Alpena Regional Medical Center
- Alpena County Airport
- Plaza Pool, located at Alpena High School

State of Michigan Facilities

- Wildlife Sanctuary Park – maintained by Alpena County
- Washington Street Roadside Park – maintained by Alpena County

Organizationally Sponsored

- Kiddie Park at Alpena County Fairgrounds – Optimist Club
- Boat Harbor Toddlers' Park – Kiwanis and Alpena Jaycees
- Arthur Sytek Park – Thunder Bay River Watershed Council

Nearby Recreational Sites – Outside Alpena Township

- Rockport Sinkholes – State-owned located in Presque Isle Township
- Besser Natural Area – State-owned located in Presque Isle Township
- Rivers Edge Golf Club – Open to the public and located on Werth Road, Wilson Township
- Alpena Sportsmen's Club, Inc. – Private located on M-32 West, Wilson Township

Joint United States (NOAA) and State of Michigan

Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Underwater Preserve – United States (NOAA) and State of Michigan — This facility was designated in October 2000 as the first Great Lakes marine sanctuary and the second sanctuary devoted to the preservation of cultural resources (shipwrecks). The sanctuary covers 448 square miles of Lake Huron in the Thunder Bay area and protects a nationally significant collection of more than 200 shipwrecks, spanning more than a century of Great Lakes shipping history. The sanctuary’s new education and museum facility is located at the former site of Fletcher Paper Company along the Thunder Bay River in the City of Alpena, utilizing a renovated factory building.

Hold page for Figure 4-1, Recreation Inventory Map